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Birth, Life, and Death

OF

JOHN FRANKS,

With the Franks he Played,

Though a meer Fool.



Printed and Sold in Aldermary Church-  
Yard, London

# To the Reader.

**THESE** pretty jests you here  
in Essex, within three days of  
were from an innocent indeed;

Such pretty pranks were never known,

As oftentimes Jack Franks has shown.

Some men are Fools only in flow.

But this a Fool all men do know ; and

Beloved he was by every one,

And when he dy'd there was great moan

He was of a middle stature and

SECRET

## THE

## P R E F A C E

JOHN FRANKS, the reputed son of John Ward, was born at Much-Estow in Essex, within three miles of Dun-  
low. He had no friends to take care of him; but his being such a fool was the cause of his well-being; for every one was in love with the sport he made.

When he was grown to be of man's stature, there was a worthy Knight, who took him to keep, where he did many strange pranks.

He was a comely person, and had a good complexion, his hair was of a dark tawny. He was of a middle stature, and good countenance. If his tongue had not betrayed his folly, he might have been taken for a wise man.

THE

~~ROBERTSON'S~~

THE  
MAD CONCEITS

OF  
JOHN FRANKS.

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CHAP. I.

Of John's merry Trick put upon his  
Master's Caterer.

THE caterer of his family going one  
day to market to buy some fish for  
his master's dinner, took Jack to bring  
them home. — Having bought some, he  
put it in a basket, and gave it to the fool;  
he went about some other business. Poor  
Jack marched towards home, but by the  
way meets with a boy who had a mag-  
pie on his fist; the boy perceiving by his  
habit he was a fool, asked him what he



and got in his basket?—Fish, said Jack.  
 What bird is that you have got? will  
 you give it me?—It is a parrot, says the  
 boy, and I will give it you for your fish.  
 —The fool soon agreed, took the magpie



and went joyfully home, but not till the  
 afternoon, where he found the cook fret-  
 ting for the loss of the fish; who meet-  
 ing him in the yard, cried out, You rogue  
 where is the fish?—says Jack I have got a  
 fine parrot here; is it not a fine parrot?  
 Sirrah, says the cook again, where is the  
 fish?—I gave them a boy for this fine  
 parrot; was it not well done, Mr. Cook?  
 —The cook and the rest of the company  
 could not forbear smiling, and so said no  
 more to him

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the taylor dead, his bed with his neck  
 broken, whence he could not come down

without help. **CHAP. II.** Without help, he said the Devil come up stairs,

Jack lays with a Taylor, and is found in the Morning astride a high Beam in the Chamber, and the Taylor dead in the Bed with his Neck broke.



**T**HE Knight where Jack lived kept a poor taylor in his house, who lay with the fool.

One morning they wondered that the taylor nor Jack did not come down; one of the servants going up, found the door fast, and calling to them, Jack only answered them, so calling more assistance, and breaking open the door, they found

the taylor dead in his bed with his neck  
 broke, and the fool set a ladder on a high  
 beam, whence he could not come down  
 without help.—They asked Jack how it  
 was? he said the Devil come up stairs,  
 tink, clink, elink, and came to my bed-  
 side, and I cried, Good devil do not take  
 me, take the taylor, so the devil broke  
 the taylor's neck, and set me upon the  
 beam. Jack was strictly examined at  
 the Assizes, and several times af-  
 ter, but he always kept in one story, and  
 never seemed concerned.

### CHAP. III.

Jack is accused by a Wench of being the  
 Father of a Bastard Child.  
 A Wench being got with child and  
 not rightly knowing who was the  
 father of it, she being had before a Jus-  
 tice of the Peace, and examined by him,  
 and it was sent to John Franks.—Jack being sent  
 for, the Justice asked him if he was the  
 father of the wench's child?—The fool  
 was so innocent, that he knew not the



meaning thereof, but stood staring  
laughing, shaking one or other by the  
hand that stood by. And when



The Justice then said unto him, And  
you guilty Jack?—I guildded, said Jack,  
I have guildded the company all over.—  
The Justice perceiving he did not under-  
stand his examination, he said to the  
wench, Hussey, you must seek another  
father for your child; so giving orders  
for her punishment, Jack was freed, and  
went laughing away at all the company.

## C H A P. VI.

Jack deceives a Sexton, and gets into a Church to preach.

ONE day Jack having a mind to be  
 one, asked one of the servants to  
 lend him a black suit of cloaths, and a  
 band and cloak. What would you do  
 with it? sirrah, said the man? I must go  
 forth to preach, said Jack. The servant,  
 willing to see what he would do, consent-  
 ed, and having put it on, with hat-  
 Jack and, and all things suitable, he looked  
 not like a fool. Now says he to the ser-  
 vants, I must go preach; and went out  
 to the park alone; the servants how-  
 ever followed him, to see what he would  
 do at; but he gave them the slip, and  
 went to a village about six miles off, and  
 enquired for the sexton's house, which  
 when he had found, he knocked at the  
 door. The Sexton coming and making a  
 low reverence, Art thou the Sexton, says  
 Jack? Yes, sir, says the sexton. Open  
 the church door, and toll the bell mme-

diately ; says Jack, for I must preach here  
his afternoon. — I will sit, replies the sexton. — So the poor man not perceiving  
who he was, went and did as he was bid.  
Jack also went and placed himself in the  
desk, with the great books before him.  
The people as they came in, made low  
reverence, expecting something extraor-  
dinary from him by his grave and devout  
appearance. — At length Jack rises, pulls



off his hat, turns over the leaves of the  
book, then gets up into the pulpit very  
devoutly, and kneels down, as though he  
would pray. The people wondering at  
his silence in the desk, still kept their eyes  
fixed upon him ; when Jack rising off his  
knees, and having a common prayer book  
in his hand, thus speaks to them : Be-

21  
loved, saith he, my text is in the fourth  
chapter of St. John, and the fourth verse.  
Then shutting the book again, he begins  
to preach, as he calls it, speaking such  
gibberish as amazed the people. Some  
turned over the leaves of their books to  
find the text, others thought he spoke  
Greek and Latin, because they did not  
understand him. — At length they found  
themselves deceived, which they had all  
known before, had it not been for his  
black cloaths; so they all went home,  
much ashamed to find themselves tricked  
by a Fool.

Jack was very proud he had preached,  
and went strutting home to his master's  
house, where all the servants were glad  
to see him, for they wondered what was  
become of him; but when they heard  
what he had done, they laughed at it  
very heartily.

## CHAP.





## CHAP. V.

Jack deceives Mr. Sorrel, a rich Yeoman, of Puddings and Lanks that hung up his Chimney.



**J**ACK was often upon the ramble; one day he went up to a yeoman's house; who loved to make sport with him. — The servants being all busy and abroad, none but the fool and he was together. — Mr. Sorrel, says Jack, shall we play at Blind Man's Buff? — Ay, says he, with all my heart, Jack. — You shall be blinded, says Jack. — That I will Jack, said he. So pinning a napkin about his eyes, and head,



now turn about, says Jack; but you see  
 Mr. Sorrel, you see. No, Jack, said he,  
 I do not see. Jack shuffled about the  
 kitchen, in order to catch him, still crying  
 you see, but when he found he did not  
 see, he ran to the chimney and whipt  
 down some puddings, and put them into  
 his pockets; this he did every time he  
 came to that end of the room, till he had  
 filled his pockets and breeches. The doors  
 being open, away runs Jack, leaving the  
 good man blindfolded, who wondering  
 he did not hear the fool, cried out, Jack,  
 Jack; but finding no answer, he pulled  
 off the napkin, and seeing the fool gone,  
 and that he had taken so many puddings  
 with him, was so enraged that he sent his  
 blood hounds after him; which when  
 Jack perceived, he takes a pudding and  
 flings it at them; the dogs smelling the  
 pudding, Jack gained ground the time;  
 and still as the dogs pursued he threw a  
 pudding at them; and thus he did till he  
 came to an house. This was spread a-  
 broad to the shame and vexation of the  
 farmer. Some time after Mr. Sorrel and  
 some other tenants went to see the fool's  
 master. Jack espying them, went and told

his Lady that Mr. Sorel was come. The lady being afraid the fool might offend him by speaking of the puddings, told Jack he should be whipped if he mentioned them. But when the were at dinner, Jack went and shaked Mr. Sorel by the hand, saying, How is it Mr. Sorel? then seeming to whisper, but speaking so loud that all the company heard him, said Not a word of the puddings, Mr. Sorel. — At this they all burst into a laughter; but the honest man was so ashamed, that he never came there again. — Ever since it is a bye-word to say, Not a word of the puddings.



## C H A P. VII.

Jack's Trick upon a Gentleman who had  
a great Nose.

**T**HERE was a gentleman who came often to his Lord's table, who had a very great nose, which every one would be taking notice of; and in his absence would be talking of. — Now fearing the fool should at any time speak of it to the gentleman, he was chid for prating; so that they thought he would speak of it no more. But one day this gentleman being there at dinner, the fool stands by him, and peeping in his face, cried out, This gentleman has no nose at all! — At which they all burst into a laughter, but the gentleman was much ashamed.



C H A P.

C H A P.

## CHAP. VII.

Jack hires a Servant to dwell with him.

**J**ACK having borrowed a scarlet cloak, a fine laced band, and a good hat, he puts them on, throwing his cloak over his shoulders, he went immediately into the park, where many people passed through upon sufferance; and there Jack walking up and down very proudly, a poor man came up to him, thinking he had been a gentleman. I will give you nothing said Jack, why don't you work? So I would sir, said the poor man, if I could get any. Why do you not go to service, said Jack? sir, I cannot tell where to get a service. What can you do? said Jack, can you pump water, carry wood, and wash foul buckets? If it please you sir, I can. What wages must I give you? What you please, Sir, said the Beggar. Then said Jack I'll give you three pounds a year. I thank your Worship, quoth he: Come home with me, said the Fool.—Then Jack came home to his Lord's house, and the



man followed him, so sitting down in the porch, he asked the man divers questions. At last came the Lord's steward, who hearing Jack talk to the man, and order him his business, stood awhile to hear a then stepping to Jack, said, How now, Jack, have you hired a servant this morning? — Yes, said the fool, laughing and shaking his ears. — The poor man then perceiving that he was deceived, did not know which way to look; but however, though he was disappointed in his master, yet he obtained a bountiful alms from the Lord; who with the rest of the family, were much pleased with the conceit of the fool.





## CHAP. VIII.

Jack complains of Mary Dover, for not cleaning him; he having bewrayed himself on taking Physick.

**T**HERE was also in this Lord's house a woman fool, whose name was Mary Dover, and she was employed by every one to do the meanest offices.— Jack had always a delight in taking any kind of physick, and his wife, as he called her then being the laundry maid, called him to his usual work to beat the buck. — Poor Jack pulled off his doublet, as at other times, and stood beating the linen, till he bewrayed himself, so that it ran down to his heels. The fools finding his shoes and stockings in such a condition, cried out aloud to Mary Dover to make him clean; but she refusing to do it, he came crying into the parlour in his shitten condition, where his lady sat at supper, complaining to her, that he had besht himself, and Mary Dover would not clean him.— The Lady and the rest of the

Company could not sit at table for the stink, yet could not forbear laughing to see him so surpris'd, and cry so much; but his presence at that time not being to be endured, she commanded one of the servants to lead him out of the room, and bid Mary Dover do that office; for none else would make him clean, and when he was cleaned, he came in again, and made them very good sport.

### C H A P. IX.

Of Jack's going to an Inn at Whitford-Bridge, and how he served the People of the House.

**J**ACK having rambled about till he was very hungry, went immediately unto an inn at Whitford Bridge, and asked the host what he could have for supper? The host knowing he was a Lord's Foot, and imagining he had money, offered him a good breast of mutton, which was then ready roasted, of which Jack was very glad, for he loved fat meat very well; so a napkin being laid, and bread and drink

brought, he sat down and eat and drank it all up, and asking what it was, they told him two-pence. Here, says he, is two brass farthings, pay yourself, and give me the change.—They laughing, asked him for more, but he said he had no more so they let him go quietly.

## C H A P. X.

Jack's Trick on a Justice of the Peace, who pretended to jest with him.

**A** Justice of the Peace being at his Lords table one day, who delighted to jest with every one, and Jack being in the room, to make them some sport, and having then a new calf-skin suit on, red and white spotted. and a young puppy in his arms, much of the same colour; he said to the justice, as he jogged him, Is not this puppy like me? The justice said It is very much like thee; now there are two puppies Jack, ha! ha! ha! Jack after going down stairs to dinner, returned again and striking the Justice on the back with his fist, the Justice seemed angry. How is it, Justice, said Jack, are you angry, let us shake hands and be friends,

The Justice gave him his hand, and the fool cried out laughing, Now here are two fools, Justice, two fools, two fools. At this they all laughed heartily, to see this great wit affronted by a fool ; especi-

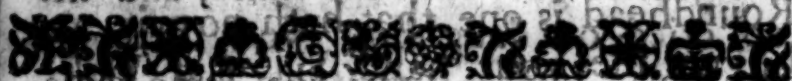


ally a gentleman whom the Justice had but a few minutes before abused by his jesting ; for he was of t'at temper that he would Jest, but never take one.

It is not safe to play with edged tools,  
Nor is it good to Jest too much with  
fools.

**C H A P.**





## C H A P. XI.

Jack's pretty Sayings and Jests, with an  
Account of his Death.

**J**ACK's Lord and Lady going one day in a coach, Jack run by the side of the coach; and upon their way they met with another Lord's coach, and seeing Jack he put off his hat in derision, and bowed himself, saying, I pray whose fool are you?—The fool presently pulled off his cap, and shaking his ears, said, I am my Lord M—r's fool: Pray whose fool are you? The gentleman being thus sharply answered, was much ashamed, and rode his way.

Jack standing by one time where some gentlemen were talking, hearing them talk of Roundheads. Roundheads, said Jack to himself. Ay, Jack, said one of them, what is a Roundhead? Now this gentleman that asked him was a Roundhead, but would not be taken for one. What is a Roundhead, said Jack? why



a Roundhead is one that hath no wit at all: give me your hand, Sir, said Jack. The gentleman did so. Ha! ha! ha! said the fool, and shook it, there I mumpt you. The rest laughed at him, at which he was vexed.

One night the Lady being at supper, Jack came into the room, bawling aloud that he could not get the coachman to buy him a chamber-pot. Madam, said he, the coachman won't buy me a pot, and I am forced to rise in the night to make water in the open yard in my shirt, and so caught cold by it: must I not have some sugar-candy madam. The lady laughed to hear how reasonable he was in his request, to give orders to the coachman to buy him what he wanted.

One time Jack, coming late to dinner in the hall, and seeing there was no room for him at table, he ran forth and came presently in again, saying, Do you hear, Sirs, the king is come into the back yard, with his coach and six horses, and a great many with him; upon which, not knowing what to think, they all run out to see. In the mean time Jack sat down, and carved for himself. They coming

into the yard, and finding none there but themselves, laughed heartily, think how the Fool had outwitted them.

He went daly morning and evening to prayers in the chapel, though he had no understanding; and each night he would pray by himself in his chamber to this purpose.

“ Lord thou knowest I can do nothing of myself; Lord, thou knowest I can do nothing; Lord have mercy upon me, and help me.”

He lived about fourscore years, and died in a Knight's house in the parish of Enfield; all that knew him being sorry for his death, poor soul, who had never done evil, but through evil example.

There might be more said of him, but that may serve for a Second Part — These stories I hope, will be the more pleasing as they are true.

F I N I S.

